

Willson House
1980 Pacheco Pass Road (State Highway 152)
Gilroy
Santa Clara County
California

HABS No. CA-2097

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Architectural and Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WILLSON HOUSE

HABS No. CA-2097

Location:

1980 Pacheco Pass Road
Gilroy, Santa Clara County, California

USGS Chittenden Quadrangle, Universal Transverse
Mercator Coordinates: 10.631300.4095540

Present Owner:

Robert Dunn
1980 Pacheco Pass Rd.
Gilroy, CA 95020

Present Occupant:

Mr. and Mrs. Dunn

Present Use:

Residence

Significance:

Brick-mason Horace Willson has the honor of "making the first brick in this section of the country," a process which he perfected in 1854. The first brick house in Santa Clara Valley, it was constructed in 1859 of brick made on the property. The house features a veranda with railed balcony above, all around the house. Besides being a brick-mason, Willson was a cattleman and farmer and at one time owned 20,000 acres.

PART I. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This structure is built of brick that were fired in a kiln on the site, the remains of which exist today.
2. Condition of fabric: Good

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: This rectangular, five bay, three story house is approximately thirty feet by forty feet.
2. Foundation: Stone
3. Walls: Red brick common bond in Flemish variation with double header between stretcher every tenth course. Rear wall enclosing a part of the veranda, is wooden siding painted white.
4. Structural system, framing: Load-bearing brick walls with redwood framing.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: There is a veranda that extends around the four sides of the house. The second floor of the veranda is supported by wooden columns consisting of two posts with a recessed panel having cut-out Gothic openings. There is a wide base and a molded cap on each column. The first floor has a basket-weave brick flooring and the second floor has asphalt roofing. A wooden railing extends around the second floor. The ceiling of the first floor is exposed structure and wooden deck. A portion of the veranda on the rear has been enclosed to house a bathroom and solarium.
6. Chimneys: There is a brick chimney on the east side of the house, approximately in the center that extends above the roof, on the gable end, projecting from the wall. The chimney narrows down at the second floor line and has a sloping brick top on each side. The chimney narrows down again at the third floor line and had a sloping brick top on each side. As it extends up from the third floor it steps in once again with a sloping brick top on the north side only. There is a projecting brick banding around the top. Another chimney on the west side of the house, near the center, projects through the roof. The large square brick chimney is capped by a projecting brick band of several courses.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance door is on the north facade.

The large wooden door has two long recessed panels above two short recessed panels. On the exterior the panels are banded with wooden molding forming elongated octagons. There is a four panel side light with wooden panel at the bottom on each side of the door. The exterior wooden panel is banded like the door, forming an elongated octagon. A four-light fixed transom panel is above, and there is a large hand-cranked door bell in the center of the door. The decorative cast metal crank handle on the door bell has a porcelain knob on the end. The doorway has wooden surrounds, sill and threshold. The head of the interior trim has a rake each side from the center and ends with the crossette at the jamb trim. There is a similar doorway and door above this on the second floor, opening from the stair hall onto the veranda. The doorway on the west side leads from the veranda into the dining room. The large wooden door has two long recessed panels above two shorter panels, wooden surround, sill and threshold. There is a large wooden lintel over the opening painted to resemble stone. The wooden framed screen door has a band extending across it at strike level with turned spindles. In opposite corners of the upper and lower panels there is a jigsawed fan. The doorway from the the rear hall leads to the outside. It has a wooden door with ten fixed glass panes wooden surround and threshold.

There is a three-light transom above and a four light sidelight each side that has a wooden panel in the lower section. There is a similar doorway and door directly above on the second floor leading to the veranda.

- b. Windows and shutters: Wooden windows on all three floors have two-over-two double-hung sashes, wooden surrounds and sills. The large lintels and sills are wooden painted to resemble stone. In the front gable of the north facade on the third floor there is a wooden window, Gothic arched, with a six-light casement sash, wooden surrounds and a brick Gothic arched head.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The gable roof with link dormer on the north facade is covered with wood shingles.
- b. Cornice, eaves: Boxed cornices - painted white - cornice returns on the gable ends.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Cellar: There is a small cellar under the stairwell that houses mechanical equipment and is reached by a wooden ladder in the closet under the stairway.
- b. First floor: The main entrance opens into a stairhall that extends the width of the house. On the left side is the living room, which was formerly two rooms. There is a fireplace on the east wall with a window on each side. There are two windows on the north wall. A window on the south wall has been closed up and is now a bookcase. A doorway on the west wall leads to the rear entry vestibule. On the right side of the vestibule is a bath and on the left side is a small anteroom leading to the solarium. There is a doorway on the south wall leading to the exterior. The bath, vestibule, anteroom and solarium are all a part of the veranda that has been enclosed. On the right side of the stairhall is a doorway leading into the dining room. There are two windows on the north wall one window and a doorway, leading to the veranda, on the west wall. The fireplace, projecting into the room, has a built-in cupboard on the left side and there is a small cupboard built into the chimney breast. On the east wall is a doorway to a storage unit under the staircase. The doorway on the south wall to the right of the chimney breast leads into the kitchen. The modern kitchen has cabinets around the room, a window on both the west and south walls and a doorway to the rear hall on the east wall.

- b. Second floor: The second floor is reached by the central stairway leading into a hallway. There are two bedrooms on the right side with a connecting bath and a bedroom with bath and dressing room on the left side. There is a corner fireplace in the left bedroom. A small vestibule behind the stair hall leads to the veranda.
 - c. The third floor is reached by a winder stair in the vestibule. There is a center room with a small room on each side, each with one window.
- 2. Stairway: The main stairway has a wooden, open-string stair. The simple wooden handrail with two turned spindles at each tread extends from a large turned newel on the first floor to the second floor, curves and extends along the openings, curving and turning and ending at the wall. The wooden stairway to the third floor is a winder with very steep risers and no handrail. Both stairs and carpeted.
 - 3. Flooring: Wooden flooring, carpeted in the main rooms. Kitchen has vinyl tile covering and the baths have ceramic tile covering. There is brick on the solarium floor.
 - 4. Walls and ceilings: There is a wooden paneling wainscot and chair rail in the dining room. Plaster walls and ceilings have wallpaper and some are painted. The ceilings in the third floor slope on the sides, following the contour of the gable roof. There is a cornice molding at the ceilings in most rooms and a picture molding in the stair hall. The living room has coved ceiling and wall junction with a wooden picture molding at the wall. There is a large furred ceiling through the center of the living room, where the wall was removed to make one large room. There is a ceramic tile wainscot in the bathrooms.
 - 5. Doorways and doors: Doorways have wooden doors with four double-raised panels, The surrounds on the first floor have raking head trim with a crossette at each jamb. There are wooden thresholds on all doorways.
 - 6. Special decorative features, trim and cabinet work: The fireplace in the living room has a brick surround with a wooden mantelpiece. The mantelpiece has a scalloped head between an engaged pilaster each side. Each pilaster has a molded cap and plinth, and there is a tile hearth. A Franklin stove has been installed in the firebox.

The fireplace in the dining room has a wooden mantelpiece, ceramic glazed tile surround, and there is a tile hearth. The firebox has a metal breast plate with cover.

The cupboard to the left of the fireplace has wooden doors in the upper section with drawers in the lower section.

The fireplace in the bedroom on the second floor extends across the corner of the room on the southeast. There is a painted brick hearth and surround with a wooden molding trimming the brick.

7. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Heating: Modern forced air heating and air conditioning.
- b. Plumbing: Modern plumbing fixtures
- c. Electrical: Modern electrical lighting fixtures. There is a large hanging crystal chandelier in the dining room, and smaller hanging crystal lighting fixtures in the hall ways.

D. Site:

- 1. General setting and orientation: The house sits on the south side of the road recessed back into a wooded area. There is a brick fence around the yard. In front of the house is a swimming pool and several gazebos around the yard. On the left side of the house is a brick barbecue pit. To the northeast of the house are the remains of a brick kiln, which is now a fishpond. The asphalt drive leads up to the house from the road to a parking area. At the road there are two brick columns, one each side of the drive, with iron gates. The drive is lined with hedges and trees.
- 2. Outbuildings: There is a two-story wooden frame house to the east of the house. The lower floor is used for kennels and the upper floor is a living quarter. To the south of the house is a tank house that is very heavily modernized and is used as kennels. The large wooden barn to the right of the house and drive has been converted into a ceramic studio and showroom. The gable roofed structure with its board-and-batten wooden siding has asphalt shingles over wooden shingles.

Prepared by: John P. White
Project Supervisor
August 1980

PART II. PROJECT INFORMATION:

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) of the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service's National Architectural and Engineering Record in cooperation with the County of Santa Clara, California. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS and Kenneth L. Anderson, Jr., Principal Architect, the project was completed during the summer of 1980 at the HABS Field Office, Santa Clara, California by John P. White, Project Supervisor (Associate Professor of Architecture Texas Tech. University); David T. Marsh, Jr., Project Foreman (Howard University); Jeffery Flemming, Project Historian (University of Chicago); Jane Lidz, Architect/Photographer; and student Architects Kimberley E. Harden (Auburn University); Melody S. Linger (University of Florida); and Mathew Poe (Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University).